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Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 113: Right of peoples to self-determination (*continued*) (A/C.3/55/L.32)

Draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.32: The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination

1. **Mr. Oda** (Egypt) introduced draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.32 entitled "The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination" on behalf of the original sponsors and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Japan, Liechtenstein and Norway, and announced that Saint Lucia had been included on the list of original sponsors erroneously. The draft resolution reiterated the provisions of the resolution approved the previous year but some additions and amendments had been made to take into account the changing situation in the Middle East and the importance of the international community's support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of the Palestinian State in order to achieve a lasting and sustainable peace in the region. In that context, a new preambular paragraph had been added which referred to the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the fifth preambular paragraph had been amended to express the hope that there would be an immediate resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis. He also hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Agenda item 114 (b): Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (*continued*) (A/55/177, A/55/213 and Add.1, A/55/214 and Add.1, A/55/275 and Add.1, A/55/279, A/55/280 and Add.1 and 2, A/55/283, A/55/288, A/55/289, A/55/291, A/55/292, A/55/296 and Add.1, A/55/302, A/55/306, A/55/328, A/55/342, A/55/360, A/55/395-S/2000/880, A/55/404-S/2000/889, A/55/408 and A/C.3/55/2)

Agenda item 114 (c): Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (*continued*) (A/55/269, A/55/282* and Corr.1, A/55/294, A/55/318, A/55/335, A/55/346, A/55/358, A/55/359, A/55/363, A/55/374, A/55/400, A/55/403, A/55/509 and A/55/426-S/2000/913)

Agenda item 114 (d): Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (*continued*) (A/55/36 and A/55/438-S/2000/93)

Agenda item 114 (e): Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (*continued*) (A/55/36)

2. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said it was appropriate that the Millennium Summit had reaffirmed the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, thus confirming the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which had been approved more than 50 years before at a time when two thirds of the nations of the world had not been able to participate in drafting it, having been under colonial rule for decades in violation of the letter and spirit of the Declaration itself. Subsequently, and in particular, following the establishment of new, independent States, the list of human rights had been supplemented and enriched, giving rise to new challenges and opening new areas for action. With the adoption of new juridical instruments and rules of conduct, some of the South's concerns had been recognized and once-ignored human rights had been highlighted, including the right to self-determination and independence. The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna had reached consensus on areas for action and objectives for the promotion of human rights, which no longer covered only civil and political rights but also, on an equal footing, economic, social and cultural rights. His delegation welcomed the creation of a Working Group on the Right to Development, which had made a promising start, and thanked the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for her contribution to the recognition and confirmation of the right to development.

3. Since the Southern countries had been the last to achieve independence, they had at times had to start from zero in building their nations in the areas of economic and social development, creation of efficient state structures, promotion of human rights and establishment of democracy. Although considerable progress had been made with regard to human rights, much remained to be done, especially given that the creation of a State based on the rule of law and able to meet its citizens' many expectations was by definition a long-term undertaking. All the efforts being made at the national level would have only limited effect if not

accompanied by real cooperation in support of policies for national development and recovery. The developing countries had therefore continued to call for mobilization of the resources necessary for implementation of the Declaration on the Right to Development as well as for forgiveness of their external debt, which burdened their budgets and hampered their progress. Such cooperation was increasingly desirable and necessary in the face of the inexorable march of globalization. The imposition of political or financial conditions on cooperation or on the granting of assistance with a view to influencing directly or indirectly the policy of Governments did not further the cause of human rights nor improve the standard of living of populations; neither should the promotion of human rights be subject to manipulation, selectivity or politicization.

4. The people of Algeria had declared their support for the consolidation of democracy, human rights and pluralism, and following independence, had established that the creation of a State of law and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms were priority objectives. The policy of civil harmony, introduced by the President of the Republic and clearly ratified by popular referendum, the goodwill and clemency measures, and the unusual openness in the political arena and among the communications media reflected the determination of the Algerian people and of the public authorities to continue to strengthen the democratic process, creating a genuine culture of human rights and a more just society, without fear or arbitrariness. The unshakeable will of the Algerian authorities to instil a culture of human rights in the daily life of the nation was attested by their adherence to international human rights conventions, their acceptance of the monitoring mechanisms envisaged thereunder, the creation of human rights protection agencies, the establishment of democratic elections for all institutions, the consecration in the Constitution of the separation of powers and of the freedoms of expression, association and assembly, the existence of an active civil society in which an extremely large number of non-governmental organizations participated, the expansion of the independent press and the introduction of an obligatory human rights course for primary schools in 1998.

5. Algeria submitted its reports to the various committees in a regular, timely manner, and intended to continue its cooperation and dialogue with those committees, as well as with other United Nations mechanisms. Motivated by the desire for transparency and for the establishment of cooperation and dialogue with non-governmental organizations, Algeria had, in 2000, by presidential invitation, welcomed visits from the non-governmental organizations that were most active in the areas of human rights and press freedom. The Amnesty International report had been published in its entirety in the Algerian press, and cooperation had been resumed with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which had conducted a series of visits to the country's penal institutions. Since the decision to consolidate a genuine democracy was incompatible with the dissemination of ideas that contravened the principles of human rights, the Algerian people had renounced extremism, fanaticism and terrorism, and the State was fulfilling its duty to protect its citizens and to halt terrorist violence. The matter of persons who had disappeared was being closely scrutinized, a process in which local groups had been participating. Violence of all kinds and the resurgence of racist and Nazi ideas were not confined to the South or to the developing countries; they also occurred in many developed countries that depicted themselves as ardent champions of human rights. The list of alleged human rights violations should not be a matter for secrecy, selectivity or barter, or be subject to self-serving and economic interests. No one should presume to have the right to judge others, since no conduct was entirely above reproach. The sole objective of the promotion and protection of human rights was to serve human life, regardless of where it was found, and such rights began with the right to life, food, health and dignity.

6. **Mr. Win** (Myanmar) said that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, procedures had been set up to promote and protect human rights, along with mechanisms to monitor how such rights were promoted, protected and realized, and, where necessary, to censure publicly those countries that failed to live up to the norms enshrined in the relevant declarations and instruments. That regime had been adopted on the assumption that it would always be underpinned by such universally accepted principles as impartiality, non-selectivity and the non-manipulation of human rights in favour of other principles. However, the inability to recognize various facets of human rights, whether civil and political rights or economic, social and cultural rights, persisted. Until recently, the right to development had not received the recognition it

deserved, and yet several developing countries had been chastised for alleged human rights violations, and their failures had been magnified disproportionately, while they were doing their utmost to satisfy the basic necessities of their rapidly growing populations. The unhealthy tendency to overstate alleged violations of civil and political rights with a view to satisfying special interest groups or domestic constituencies had become a characteristic of the Third Committee's country-specific draft resolutions. It was nonetheless heartening that the independent expert on the right to development had declared that countries must strive to implement the right to food, primary education and primary health care; Myanmar was making every effort to do so with the available resources. During the 1999/2000 fiscal year, it had produced 1,072 million bushels of rice, 300,000 tons of edible oil, and 2 million metric tons of pulses. With respect to primary education, the enrolment rate was 99.3 per cent, as reported by the *Human Development Report 2000* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); that report also indicated that the adult literacy rate was 84 per cent. Myanmar had allocated to public health 14.4 per cent of total Government expenditures; life expectancy at birth had risen to 60.6 years, and 91 per cent of the population had been immunized against tuberculosis and 85 per cent against measles. Myanmar had made significant progress with regard to three of the important human rights, even despite the economic and political measures imposed on it by some Western countries. It was indeed ironic that those same countries were now trying to portray its development problems as human rights violations.

7. One of the most remarkable aspects of the current globalization process was the miraculous advances that had been made in information and communications technologies. Although the awesome power of the Internet had enabled people from every region of the world to connect with each other, its technical vulnerability had raised new issues. In addition to being a tool for the spread of hate speech and images, it had also proven to be an effective vehicle for spreading misinformation, to the detriment of the country concerned. It was therefore essential to verify the information collected from the Internet, by comparing it with that derived from other, credible sources, including Governments. The current tendency to give greater credence to sources other than governmental ones was an unjust and unfair approach to human rights matters, and ultimately an impediment to the formulation of credible reports. Cooperation in the field of human rights should include respect for State sovereignty and a thorough understanding of the political, economic and social problems of the country concerned on the part of the international community. Within the framework of its consistent policy of cooperation with the United Nations, Myanmar had twice received visits from the new Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

8. Myanmar wished to accelerate the political transition process, and that required a consensus among all the national groups and those representing all strata of the society. Although the Government had no intention of unnecessarily delaying the process or continuing to hold on to the reins of power, it was vitally important to thwart attempts to derail the process. The recent events in Yangon, which had compelled the Government to take the most lenient and harmless measures in the interest of preserving public tranquillity, had been one such attempt. It was worth noting that not a single person had been physically harmed, not to speak of any loss of life, in those so-called political confrontations. In a country like Myanmar, where stability was an essential condition for taking further political steps in its transition to democracy, attempts to criticize the Government's sincere efforts to move forward had to be viewed more seriously. Such attempts could not be allowed to get out of control and derail the peaceful transition process. That genuine concern had led the Government to take certain preventive measures against the National League for Democracy party and some of its members. The measures were temporary and had in no way interfered with the well-being and social life of the persons involved. As a result of those initiatives, it had been possible to reopen the universities and colleges. It was the Government's hope that the peaceful pursuit of education in those institutions would not be sacrificed by so-called political activists in the narrow interest of one political party.

9. Concerning Myanmar's cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), it had in October received an ILO technical cooperation mission and, with its advice, it had adopted the necessary administrative, executive and legislative measures to ensure that there could be no instances of forced labour in the country. Those measures should completely do away with any apprehension the international community might have that laws inherited from the

British colonial Government might be applied so as to facilitate forced labour in the territory of Myanmar. In addition, the Government continued to cooperate with ICRC to improve prison conditions. The Administration was determined to pursue its current efforts to consolidate its achievements in social, cultural, economic and political fields, and to intensify its endeavours to ensure the progressive enjoyment of all aspects of human rights by the people of Myanmar.

10. **Mr. Al-Ethary** (Yemen) said that his country was advancing rapidly towards a society based on civic responsibility, democracy and freedom of expression, and that democracy could not be fully achieved if human rights were not respected. The legislation and measures adopted by his Government demonstrated its decision to establish a democracy on that basis. A high-level council for human rights had been established, with links to international organizations and local non-governmental organizations, and efforts were being made to involve the people in public life, especially through the establishment of non-governmental organizations in the human rights field dealing with political, social and economic questions.

11. Human rights could be enjoyed only in the context of economic development. Democracy could not flourish in the shadow of hunger and poverty, and no people suffering from hunger could give thought to human rights. Yemen had always condemned selectivity in the application of human rights. There were countries which made light of violations of some human rights, as in the case of the crimes committed against the Palestinian people and especially its children; its daily confrontations with the Israeli forces constituted an affront to the international community. Yemen reaffirmed its commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and the observance of the relevant international instruments, and underscored the fact that a selective approach to human rights could in no way contribute to the noble principles set out in international instruments, especially in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

12. **Mr. Al Saidi** (Kuwait) observed that, as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had indicated in her report (A/55/36), international cooperation for the establishment of human rights should take place within the framework of the United Nations and must be grounded in the vision set forth in the Charter. It was therefore important to strengthen the Office of the High Commissioner so that it could fulfil its task. It was a welcome development that at its fifth special session the Commission on Human Rights had called for an investigation of the human rights violations perpetrated by Israel against the Arab citizens of the occupied Arab territories, which had been the cause of some 200 deaths and thousands of injuries.

13. Human rights issues were closely bound up with historical, cultural, economic and social factors, which had to be taken into account when considering them. To apply the experience of one nation to another, different nations could work to the detriment of the promotion and protection of human rights. The consolidation of the rule of law and of national institutions, together with dialogue on the basis of mutual respect, were the best ways of guaranteeing that human rights would be protected and promoted.

14. In fulfilment of its international commitments, Kuwait had acceded to most of the United Nations human rights instruments, which were reflected in its national legislation. The latest international instrument signed by Kuwait had been the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. In that connection, Kuwait reaffirmed its conviction that all who committed crimes against humanity must be brought to justice; its Constitution incorporated that position of principle. Kuwait applied all the international human rights instruments and norms on the basis of its cultural heritage and its Shariah. Kuwaiti citizens exercised their rights in a democratic environment in which freedom of expression reigned. Women's issues had particular significance in the country and the Government was in the process of revising its legislation to ensure that women could exercise their political rights freely. With regard to the Kuwaiti prisoners of war in Iraq, his delegation urged the international community and the United Nations to put pressure on Iraq to free them and the nationals of other countries so that they could enjoy the right to live in freedom, and at the same time it invited Iraq to continue its cooperation.

15. **Mr. Shin** Gil-sou (Republic of Korea) said that one of the hallmark achievements of the United Nations had been its indispensable work for the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The principles set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had served as a source of inspiration in the struggle for human dignity since its adoption. A majority of Member States had ratified the various

instruments concluded over the years and an array of international human rights mechanisms had been established. In that context, he welcomed the opening for signature of the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the appointment by the Secretary-General of a special representative on the situation of human rights defenders. He regretted that the special mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights did not all enjoy the cooperation of the countries involved in their efforts to fulfil their mandates. Those countries must respond rapidly and in good faith to decisions taken by the international community for the purpose of evaluating the overall human rights situation in their territories.

16. Despite the strenuous efforts of the international community to protect human rights and ensure fundamental freedoms, gross human rights violations continued to occur in many areas of the world, particularly areas embroiled in civil wars and conflicts, during which innocent civilians, including children and women, were victims of the indiscriminate use of force. The international community must above all encourage the rival parties and their leaders to seek national reconciliation and join in building stable and democratic countries able to meet the needs of their people. The international community must also ensure that those responsible for crimes against humanity were brought to justice. The Security Council's initiative to establish a special court to try perpetrators of crimes in Sierra Leone would contribute to such efforts. The international community must also promote measures to prevent crises which could lead to serious human rights violations. The tragic events which had led to widespread human suffering in the former Yugoslavia, East Timor and, more recently, the Middle East, illustrated the importance of efforts to prevent such tragedies.

17. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had observed in her report (A/55/36), the universal culture of human rights could not flower in the midst of global poverty. It was therefore encouraging to see the international community place growing importance on economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. As the dynamic forces of globalization accelerated growth and prosperity across the planet, the human rights situation would improve. However, given the deep concern of the developing countries with regard to their limited capacity to participate in the global economy and consequent marginalization, one of the major challenges in the coming years would be how to ensure that the benefits of the global economy were shared by all. Given the close link between globalization and the right to development, he welcomed the discussions held during the first session of the Working Group on the Right to Development and expressed the hope that, building on the progress made, the second session would produce a fruitful outcome which would enhance the realization of the right to development at the national and international levels. He cautioned, however, that when promoting economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development, the international community must bear in mind that all human rights were closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing, and it was neither justifiable nor appropriate to favour some categories of human rights over others.

18. Hatred and prejudice against different races and religions were the root causes of human rights violations. It was thus imperative that all nations develop a culture of tolerance and accept diversity of race, religion and culture as a catalyst for greater well-being rather than a factor hampering development. In that context he looked forward to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which should aim to ensure full recognition of the dignity and equality of all and full respect for their human rights by adopting a declaration and a concrete programme of action which would provide structures, remedies and standards in that area. It was heartening that more than 60 heads of State and Government, including the President of the Republic of Korea, had signed the Declaration entitled "Tolerance and Diversity: A Vision for the 21st Century", submitted by the High Commissioner in her capacity as Secretary-General of the Conference, attesting unequivocally to the international community's resolve to make headway in the fight against racism.

19. **Ms. Krichene** (Tunisia) said that the commitment made by the heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration to the promotion of democracy and the strengthening of the rule of law and respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, had given new impetus to strive for those objectives. Her delegation shared the opinion expressed by the High Commissioner in her report with regard to

the progress made in the area of protection and promotion of human rights. The universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights and the importance of the principle of non-discrimination were currently recognized by all. On one hand, greater attention was being given to human rights in the formulation of regional, subregional and national policies, and on the other the international community was putting greater emphasis on respect for human rights and implementation of international humanitarian law in situations of armed conflict. She also agreed with the High Commissioner that priority must be given to preventing human rights violations. The ability of the Office of the High Commissioner to take action must be strengthened in order to further the realization of economic, social and cultural as well as civil and political rights and to reinforce coordination between the Office and other international and regional organizations with a view to facilitating better analysis of the situation in that area and the adoption of preventive measures. She welcomed the programme of work of the special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants and stressed the importance of implementing his plan of action, in particular the regional initiatives on the promotion of dialogue between countries of origin, transit and destination.

20. When the international community was confronted with grave human rights violations, it had the obligation to denounce them and to identify the perpetrator. It was time to call a halt to impunity and to provide the necessary protection to victims. The human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories was a matter of concern to her delegation. The international community must not continue to tolerate violence against the civilian population of Palestine, in particular against women and children. Tunisia condemned the human rights violations that had occurred in the occupied Palestinian territories, and called for full implementation of the relevant resolutions and of international law, in particular the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

21. The international community was obliged to promote the creation of conditions favouring the full exercise of the right to development and to act rapidly to protect future generations from poverty, which was the main obstacle to the achievement of that right. A future in which part of humanity was marginalized and excluded must not be accepted. Tunisia supported the conclusions of the independent expert on the right to development. That was not solely a matter of reducing monetary poverty, but of enhancing capacities. It therefore supported the proposal to achieve the implementation of the right to food, primary health care and education. In that regard, the President of Tunisia had appealed to the international community to create a "global solidarity fund", in order to fight poverty and to alleviate the consequences of the hunger suffered by millions of human beings. That fund would complement measures undertaken by the international community to combat poverty with a view to realizing the right to development and to making solidarity a fundamental value in international relations.

22. Tunisia had adopted a global strategy for the achievement of human rights, and, within that framework, had introduced in-depth reforms into almost all codes currently in force with a view to strengthening political pluralism and democracy and eliminating all forms of discrimination, so that Tunisian society could evolve in a stable manner. Within the context of social and economic reforms, important strides had been made in such sectors as education, health, housing, the emancipation of women, the protection of children's rights and the struggle against poverty. In the political arena, pluralist municipal elections had been held in a climate of transparency and respect for democratic standards. In addition, the participation of women in public life had improved, with women winning 20 per cent of the vote. Priority had also been placed on youth employment, and a national employment fund had been set up to finance government programmes to create jobs, provide training and launch small businesses. The many activities undertaken by Tunisia in the area of human rights testified to its political will to implement the international conventions to which it was a party. The public authorities guaranteed the effective implementation of human rights, and all detected abuses had received the judicial and administrative attention required by law. Likewise attesting to the political will of Tunisia were the creation of committees of inquiry and the punishment of responsible parties. Tunisia would continue to defend all human rights on the national, regional and international levels, in keeping with the spirit of tolerance of its people and the commitment of its leaders.

23. **Ms. Hajjaji** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), referring to sub-item (c), acknowledged that the special rapporteurs and representatives worked under difficult conditions and carried out sensitive missions. They were required to conduct investigations, monitor human rights violations, and prevent the occurrence of such violations, while at the same time facing problems of funding and human resources. In that regard, various measures could be adopted to improve the efficacy of their work.

24. The appointment of special rapporteurs and representatives should take into consideration professional qualifications and the ability to work under demanding conditions, with attention to the principles of equitable geographical distribution and gender balance. Taking into account the fact that candidates came from different legal systems and diverse cultures, it was preferable to appoint a rapporteur who shared the culture, spoke the language, and was familiar with the history and religion as well as the socio-economic and political situation of the State in which he or she would work. Integrity, impartiality and independence were fundamental factors, that should be reflected in the work of the special rapporteurs, representatives and experts. Their reports must be based on credible information sources, and must disregard subjective, political, racial, selective or partisan considerations.

25. The Office of the High Commissioner should offer a general information programme to the special rapporteurs and representatives, especially those assuming such duties for the first time, and should facilitate their access to the Office's web sites. It was hoped that the experts and officials of the Secretariat would complete their consideration of the draft code of conduct and draft guidelines for rapporteurs, and would incorporate them into the manual on the work of the special rapporteurs and representatives. In order to avoid overlapping and to save effort, time and resources, the special rapporteurs and representatives should exchange information and coordinate their work with the advisory services and technical organs of the Office of the High Commissioner in a number of countries as well as with United Nations agencies working in the field, especially UNDP. In that regard, the High Commissioner should take into consideration the decisions and conclusions of the special rapporteurs and representatives in the preparation and implementation of projects for technical cooperation with States.

26. Mechanisms were needed to monitor issues being investigated in a country. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya attached particular importance to economic, social and cultural rights and favoured the attention given to civil and political rights. In order to facilitate their work and enable them to gather full information on the countries they were considering, the monitoring mechanisms must cooperate with the national institutions and non-governmental organizations active in human rights within a given country. To that end, there had to be coordination and an exchange of information between the monitoring mechanisms and the treaty bodies, especially during the consideration of reports submitted by States parties.

27. Those who accepted a mandate as special rapporteurs or special representatives should consult with the Office of the High Commissioner before visiting the country in question, to ensure that matters of concern were taken up with the authorities of the country and to guarantee that the contacts would produce good results. Those with mandates relating to special procedures should transmit their reports to the country in question in sufficient time for the Government to prepare its reply and submit it as an official document to be distributed at the same time as the report of the special rapporteur or special representative.

28. His Government supported the High Commissioner's call for contributions that were not specifically earmarked and for a more flexible allocation of resources, and it supported the financing of human rights activities and programmes from the regular budget of the United Nations. Also, it was necessary to set a time limit on the mandates of the various special rapporteurs, special representatives and independent experts. Lastly, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya shared the High Commissioner's view that priority should be given to the human rights component of peacekeeping operations, and endorsed the memorandum of understanding signed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

29. **Mr. Apata** (Nigeria) said that the international human rights treaties constituted important platforms for the promotion and protection of human rights and

fundamental freedoms and were the basis for preventing possible violations of human rights. Nigeria was a party to most of the international human rights instruments and had, as a demonstration of its commitment, signed during the Millennium Summit the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

30. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was doing commendable work in advocating a human rights-based approach to development as well as initiatives to mainstream human rights into the activities of the entire United Nations system. Human rights were indivisible: civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights were mutually reinforcing and their implementation was the surest preventive strategy. Certainly Governments had a responsibility to ensure that all rights were protected. However, factors such as the external debt burden, the unequal enjoyment of the benefits of globalization and the negative impact of structural adjustment policies could diminish Nigeria's capacity to protect the economic, social and cultural rights of its citizens. Also, the ravages caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria, tuberculosis and other preventable diseases could have bad repercussions on the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. It was therefore necessary to take a comprehensive, holistic human rights approach to development based on internationally agreed norms, which would lead to greater accountability, more meaningful participation by the people and the empowerment of the people.

31. Nigeria was proud of its human rights achievements since the establishment of a democratic order in the country. In that connection, it should be noted that the panel set up in 1999 to investigate past human rights abuses had begun its work. The expectation was that not only would the wrongs of the past be righted but also that the structures needed to prevent the recurrence of such abuses would be set up. Cognizant of the relationship between human rights and development, Nigeria continued to pursue a vigorous poverty-alleviation programme designed to address the worst cases of poverty, unemployment and economic deprivation, in the hope that the people could thus participate more constructively in the task of nation-building. Regarding the concern expressed by some delegations about the possible existence of a religious conflict in Nigeria, it should be observed that, constitutionally, Nigeria remained a secular State under which the freedoms of expression and of religion were guaranteed. Various religions coexisted in the country, and what might appear as a conflict among them was a symptom of other problems. The democratic structures now in place in the country remained an effective guarantee that the different views would be reconciled. Nigeria would continue to take appropriate steps to improve its promotion and protection of all aspects of human rights.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.